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Economic and environmental questions: sustainable development

Letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the final report of the Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up implementation of the Mauritius Strategy, held in Frigate Bay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, from 5 to 7 October 2005 (see annex).

On behalf of the small island developing States participating in that meeting, I request that the report be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under item 52 (b) of the preliminary list of its sixty-first session, and of the ECOSOC, and that it be made available at the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

(*Signed*) Joseph **Christmas**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 13 April 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up implementation of the Mauritius Strategy

Saint Kitts and Nevis, 5-7 October 2005

The Caribbean Regional Meeting to follow up on implementation of the Mauritius Strategy was convened in Saint Kitts and Nevis from 5 to 7 October 2005 at the Marriott Saint Kitts Resort and Royal Beach Casino. The meeting was attended by Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Puerto Rico and United States Virgin Islands, the Caribbean Community secretariat (CARICOM), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States secretariat (OECS), the Association of Caribbean States secretariat (ACS), the Caribbean Regional Negotiation Machinery (CRNM), the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI), the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Relief Agency (CDERA), the University of the West Indies (UWI), the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), the subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Caribbean (ECLAC-POS), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Caribbean Conservation Alliance (CCA), CPDC, Caribbean Civil Society Forum (CCSF), Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST), Caribbean Knowledge and Learning Network (CKLN), the Caribbean Water Partnership (CWP), the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women, Coalition for Community Participation in Governance Jamaica and the Non-Governmental Organizations Women's Resource and Outreach Centre Jamaica.

The opening session was chaired by Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrews, Ministry of Sustainable Development. Welcoming remarks were given by Ms. Diane Quarless, Chief of the Small Island Developing States Unit, of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Thomas Gittens, on behalf of the UNDP Resident Representative and Resident Coordinator for Barbados and OECS, Mr. Neil Pierre, Director of the subregional headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean for the Caribbean, and Ms. Lolita Applewaite, Deputy Secretary-General of the CARICOM secretariat. A keynote address was given by His Excellency the Honourable Timothy Harris, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Commerce of Saint Kitts and Nevis. The vote of thanks was given by Mr. Carlisle Richardson, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the United Nations.

Panel presentation and policy dialogue on critical challenges and opportunities to be addressed by the region

The session was held on 5 October, and was facilitated by Mr. Thomas Gittens, UNDP. Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrews of Saint Kitts and Nevis was elected Chairman

of the Meeting. Mr. Hector Conde Almeida of Cuba and Mr. Roland Antonius of Netherlands Antilles were elected Vice-Chairmen, and Ms. Henna Uiterloo of Suriname was elected as Rapporteur.

Panel presentations were made by Mr. Franklin McDonald, Dr. LaVerne Ragster, Dr. Leonard Nurse and Mr. Gordon Bispham. Statements were made and questions raised by CEHI, OECS secretariat, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Guyana, Suriname, Barbados, CKLN, CDERA, Trinidad and Tobago, Netherlands Antilles, CARICOM secretariat and responses were given by the panellists.

Mr. Franklin McDonald gave an overview of the priorities and continuing needs of the region, focusing in particular on marine, coastal and natural resources. Dr. LaVerne Ragster focused on capacity-building possibilities for the region with emphasis on the newly proposed University Consortium. Dr. Leonard Nurse elaborated the role of UWI in the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy. Mr. Gordon Bispham gave perspectives on the importance of continued civil society participation in the articulation of national strategies towards the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy.

During discussion, the following were highlighted:

- There are training and capacity-building needs at all levels;
- There is also a need to place emphasis on training persons who are actual practitioners;
- There is an absence of a mechanism for best practices and information and skills sharing at the regional level, which has led to the perception that sustainable development was being implemented in a fragmented manner;
- The need for an enhanced reporting mechanism in the region;
- The need to revise systems of land classification for environmental planning, improvement of regulatory arrangements for land use management and the enhancement of physical development plans;
- Further development of regional and local area plans for disaster mitigation;
- The need to adhere to existing standards such as building codes;
- Continued attention to coastal zone and water resource management;
- There is need for greater integration of the private sector in sustainable development strategies;
- Importance was given to building economic competitiveness and social resilience, and the need to focus on implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and poverty reduction plans;
- Consideration of measures to implement the MEAs;
- The need for partnerships between government agencies, private sector and regional universities for capacity-building;
- Consideration should be given to framing sustainable development plans within CSME. In this regard there is need for further analysis on how the social and environmental programmes will be impacted by CSME;
- The need to coordinate environmental standards across the region;

- The importance of generating relevant data for decision-making; and
- The need to improve synergies among regional organizations in areas of importance to SIDS.

Consideration of integrated approaches to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation-linkages and synergies between sectors, using climate change, energy, atmosphere and industrial development as examples

The session was held on 6 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Presentations were made by Ms. Skerritt-Andrews, Dr. Hugh Sealy and Professor Albert Henry Binger. Statements were made and questions raised by Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Haiti, CCA, CEHI, Guyana, CCSF, UNDP, CCST, CARICOM secretariat, ECLAC-POS, CWC, and ACS secretariat.

Ms. Shirley Skerritt-Andrew and Dr. Hugh Sealy described the experiences of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Barbados in their implementation of a national mechanism for the implementation of a national sustainable development strategy. Their experiences underscored the following:

- The importance of an integrated rather than sectoral approach to programming for sustainable development;
- The challenges of limited human resource capacity in specialized fields such as GIS, building management and environmental impact assessment;
- Note was made that CARICOM has a technical assistance programme, subsumed under the Work Programme of CSME. This is an entry point that could be expanded to take on board the needs of sustainable development, as noted by the meeting;
- The need for reconciling policymaking functions with practical implementation;
- The continuing need for financial resources at the national level;
- The desirability of establishing a pool of regional experts for deployment on short-term assignments in the service of national Governments;
- The importance of developing national sustainable development policies The Barbados Model was based on the following principles and objectives: quality of life; conservation of resources — recognizing that there are bio-physical limits to growth; determining the carrying capacity of the island; ensuring economic efficiency and equity. It should also ensure true participation of all stakeholders;
- The importance of developing sustainable development indicators.

Professor Binger discussed the importance of maximizing synergies among sectors to build resilience in small States, using as example the energy, tourism, agriculture, wastewater and land management. He also discussed the importance to SIDS of improving energy efficiency and on developing alternate energy sources, with emphasis on OTEC. He noted that SIDS tend to discount the vast resource that the oceans offer as an energy option. He also presented a case study on the use of sugar cane as biofuel for electricity production. He highlighted the importance of cutting import expenses for fuel which would in turn lead to social and economic

benefits. SIDS should carry out energy audits, resource evaluation and energy usage profiles. They should assess and take action on the most suitable renewable energy and energy efficiency measures available. OTEC and biomass were in his view the most promising applications, but there is also ample scope for using simple solar applications.

Consideration of a regional mechanism/consultative framework for most effective, coordinated, coherent implementation of the implementation of the BPOA/MSI

The session was held on 6 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Presentations were made by Mr. Arthur Gray (ECLAC-POS) and Ms. Glenda Itiaba (CARICOM secretariat). Statements were made and questions raised by Trinidad and Tobago, ACS secretariat, CEHI, Guyana, CSTC, CCSF, CPDC, CDERA, ECLAC-POS, CRNM and CCA.

The session was continued on 7 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Statements were made and questions raised by Saint Lucia, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Montserrat, Guyana, Netherlands Antilles, Cuba, OECS secretariat, UWI, CDERA, CPDC, Grenada, CCA, CCSF, ECLAC-POS and CARICOM secretariat.

The presentations from ECLAC-POS and CARICOM secretariat described the region's experience in attempting to establish a permanent regional coordinating mechanism to support national implementation of sustainable development and the Barbados Programme of Action. They made recommendations on possible approaches for the creation of a new mechanism.

The meeting reaffirmed that there was need for a regional coordinating mechanism for the implementation of the BPOA/MSI. It should be pan-Caribbean in scope, and should mirror national coordination efforts and reflect national priorities. Some functions of the mechanism were discussed such as coordination of implementation across the region through liaison with Governments and agencies, provision of advice on global and regional sustainable development issues for Governments, agencies and civil society, identification of transboundary issues for the region, and supporting national implementation via technical and other resources, arranging and coordinating consultative meetings. Furthermore, there was a need to establish commonly agreed sustainable development indicators to be utilized by the mechanism for reporting and monitoring purposes.

It was noted that there should be a clear political directorate for oversight, as well as a need for agreement on the functions of the mechanism, to identify gaps in the region. The very serious issues of coordination at the national level and reporting need to be addressed.

It was noted that SIDS and regional agencies should apply the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation to their current activities and development plans. It was suggested that a meeting could convene at end of CARICOM Council as a Caribbean sustainable development council. Other alternatives could also be explored. It was concluded that the mechanism needs to be financially sustainable and properly resourced. Finally it was emphasized that the mechanism should promote cooperation among the countries of the region.

A core group was established for considering elements for the new mechanism, with the following members: ACS secretariat, ECLAC-POS, CARICOM secretariat, OECS secretariat, United States Virgin Islands, Saint Lucia, Belize (not present), Cuba, Jamaica, Guyana, CCA (facilitating and coordinating with NGOs, CAIC and CCL).

Consideration of national mechanisms and frameworks for most effective implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action/Mauritius Strategy for Implementation

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Vice-Chairman. Statements were made by Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Dominica, Jamaica, Guyana and Saint Lucia. A number of countries presented their experiences with national coordination of sustainable development issues. Key principles identified for constructive processes include transparency, inclusiveness of all stakeholders, and adequate resources. Some countries emphasized that sustainable development principles had been included in their national planning processes, including consideration of cultural aspects to development. While there were many best practices identified, it was recognized that each individual country must adapt these according to its national circumstances.

Consideration of programmes for operationalization of the MSI with focus on regional and subregional programming based on priorities identified by the region

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Chairman. Presentations were made by the CARICOM secretariat and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Statements were made and questions raised by United States Virgin Islands, Guyana and Cuba.

Conclusion of the meeting

The session was held on 7 October, and was chaired by the Chairman. The report of the meeting was presented by the Rapporteur. Statements were made and questions raised by CPDC and Netherlands Antilles. A clarification was given by the Secretariat. The Chairman proposed that the report of the meeting be adopted by acclamation and that the Rapporteur be entrusted with completing the editing of the report supported by the secretariats, for subsequent circulation to all participants.

CARICOM also circulated their document on partnerships for sustainable development in the Caribbean Region which documented a series of partnership proposals developed by the region in preparation for the Mauritius International Meeting. A youth caucus representative presented a statement on behalf of civil society participants.

The Chairman thanked the organizers and declared the meeting closed.